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*Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515*

*Anna G. Eshoo
Eighteenth District
California*

April 13, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

One of the most important safeguards in our democracy is ensuring the diversity of viewpoints in the media. This is particularly true for our public airwaves which belong to the American people. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) acts as the trustee of the airwaves on behalf of our citizens and has a Congressional mandate to ensure that broadcast television stations do not become concentrated in too few hands. For these reasons, I write to express my serious concerns with your proposal to reinstate the outdated UHF discount which would lead to further consolidation in the broadcast television industry.

While there was a time when discounting the impact of UHF signals against the national ownership cap made sense, that time has since passed. As you point out in your draft Order, the technical rationale for maintaining the UHF discount no longer exists following the transition to digital television. Digital UHF signals may now even be superior to VHF signals. In light of these facts, the previous FCC rightly viewed the UHF discount as obsolete.

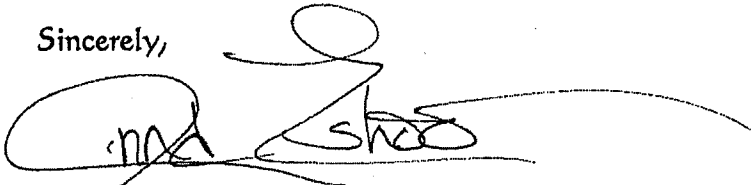
Broadcast television plays a critical role in our country, particularly as a bulwark against the dramatic rise of "fake news." But fulfilling this role requires a vibrant diversity of ownership among broadcasters. Further consolidation will ensure that there are fewer independent news outlets serving as a counter-balance to misleading or inaccurate information from other sources. This will not serve the public interest or our democracy well.

I'm also concerned about your plans to review and potentially raise the national ownership cap which was explicitly set by Congress on a bipartisan basis in 2004. In adopting a new cap, we made it clear that such a serious change to the media landscape must be left to Congress, not to the FCC. Moving forward with a proceeding to consider increasing the cap therefore runs contrary to Congressional intent.

The media ownership limits are critical to our democracy. I urge you not to move forward with reinstating the UHF discount or any effort to raise the national ownership cap. In a democracy, there should be many voices to the many, not fewer.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these serious issues and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna C. Eshoo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anna C. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
The Honorable Michael O'Rielly